

25th December (1898).—Bustards "calling" at night.

26th December (1899).—Male bird "strutting."

With the exception of two instances (16th June and 13th July) all these records point to January, February, and March as the nesting months here. The "strutting" and "calling" are also confined to these months, with the end of December thrown in. I can find no mention made of the "calling" by any authority. It is only done at night, and consequently hard to prove. I may possibly be wrong, but don't fancy so. The "call" is a soft, hollow roar, which one finds hard to describe in words, but it can be produced by contracting the lips to a circle just large enough to insert the point of one's little finger and then pronouncing "who-o-o-o," drawn out by expressing the breath fairly forcibly, so that the sound is produced by the rigid lips and not the roof of the mouth.—FRED. L. BERNEY. Richmond (N.Q.), 15/4/03.

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CASTERTON (VICT.) NOTES.—On two occasions I have noted male birds of Brown Song-Lark (*Cinclorhampus cruralis*) after the others had left. They were shy and quite songless.

In the latter end of winter last year I found Sparrows (introduced) rearing broods in the deserted homes of the Fairy Martin (*Petrochelidon ariel*).

Two seasons ago saw nest with two eggs of White-browed Sericornis (*S. frontalis*) in a hanging fern in a bush-house. They were finally deserted. This season they reared two broods in a large pampas grass in the garden.

Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) in great numbers have remained here this year.

Last year I saw large numbers of Tree-Swallows (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) "camping" on the dry sandy bed of the Glenelg River. They seemed to be simply resting. As the weather was warm, could it be that they were "cooling off"? They were all packed together and when alarmed flew away, only to return in a little while.

16th April, 1903.—Saw first Robin (Flame-breasted).—ERNEST A. D'OMBRAIN. 26/4/03.

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## Descriptions of a New *Xerophila* and a New *Acanthiza* from Western Australia.

BY ALEX. WM. MILLIGAN, PERTH.

SOME twelve months ago a single skin of a *Xerophila*, obtained at Pindar, in the Murchison district of this State, was submitted to me for identification by Mr. B. H. Woodward, F.G.S., the Director of the Western Australian Museum.

A careful examination disclosed that major specific differences (hereafter mentioned) existed between it and the already described

species of the genus *Xerophila*. I subsequently sought to get additional skins from the locality indicated, but without success until a few weeks ago, when Mr. Frederick Lawson, a British ornithologist, satisfied my requirements by forwarding me seven excellently filled skins of adult birds of both sexes, secured by him in the neighbourhood of Lake Austin.

After comparing those skins with skins of *X. leucopsis* (Gould) from Victoria and South Australia, and with the descriptions of that bird and *X. pectoralis* (Gould) in the British Museum Catalogue and the plates and letter-press in Gould's "Birds of Australia," and also with the description and plate of *X. nigricincta* (North) in the "Report of the Horn Expedition" and a skin of the last-named species, I have not any hesitation in declaring the Murchison bird a new species. It may be distinguished from (a) *X. leucopsis* by the presence of a thicker bill and of deep dull chestnut rump, flanks, and sides, and a chestnut and white abdomen, and white chin, throat, and chest, and by the absence of the faint subterminal cross bars on the breast; (b) from *X. pectoralis* principally by the absence of the chestnut-brown back and the well-defined pectoral band of cinnamon-brown and the chestnut and white flanks, which in the new species are almost uniform chestnut; and (c) from *X. nigricincta* by the absence of the narrow black pectoral band and the cinnamon back which distinguish that species. The new species appears to occupy an intermediate position between *X. pectoralis* and *X. nigricincta*. The technical description of the new species is as follows:—

*XEROPHILA CASTANEIVENTRIS* (Chestnut-bellied Whiteface), sp.  
nov.

General colour above, including ear coverts and sides of neck, dark brown, with darker centres to feathers, the brown being deeper on the head and nape; the wings deeper brown than the mantle, and with edges of primaries whitish, and outer edges of secondaries slightly rufous and inner edges whitish; rump, flanks, and sides uniform dull chestnut; abdomen parti-coloured with that colour and white in irregular but distinct patches; upper tail coverts same shade as mantle; under tail coverts white; two central tail feathers blackish-brown, showing faint cross bars in certain lights—the five lateral feathers on each side black, tipped with white; under webs of tail feathers deep ashy, with faint cross bars and with white tips very pronounced; under wing coverts ashy, with pinkish-white edges; chest, throat, cheeks, chin, and face white; a patch of light brown feathers encroaching on sides of chest; bill stout and Finch-like, and black; iris pale yellow; eyes and feet black. Flesh measurements—total length, 4.1; culmen, 0.5; wing, 2.4; tail, 2; tarsus, .75.

The sexes are alike, except that in the female the rump shows a deeper colour, and all the tail feathers are tipped white, and the breast shows a faint glow of pinkish-buff.

*Locality*.—Day Dawn, Murchison.

Types in Western Australian Museum, Perth.

The following field-notes by Mr. Lawson regarding the new species will, I am sure, prove interesting:—"The cinnamon flanks are a consistent feature. The call-note is musical, though rather plaintive. They love rocky places and are ground feeders. Usually I find the species in company with *Sericornis brunnea* and *Acanthiza pyrrhopygialis*. They are fairly common, but I have been leaving them until in good feather. They are a flaky-plumaged bird, and the loss of a few feathers about the head is always perceptible and an eyesore."

The second new bird belongs to the genus *Acanthiza*, and to that section where (a) the dark tail band occupies nearly the terminal half of the feather, and (b) the base of the tail is brightly-coloured like the rump and upper tail coverts. It was discovered by Mr. Lawson in the month of May last. The bill is remarkably robust for an *Acanthiza*. The general colour of the upper surface is much more sombre than with the *Acanthizæ* generally. The head, neck, and upper mantle of the male bird are bluish-grey, with black longitudinal striations, some of the feathers of the forehead showing hoary-grey sections, and producing a rigid "lined" appearance. The "scaling" or shell-marked feathers of the forehead, present in many members of the genus, are absent in this one. Above the rump is a conspicuous patch of white silky feathers, and the rump and upper tail coverts are snuff-coloured, as also is the basal half of the tail. The sub-ocular and auricular regions are evenly and regularly "rippled." The plantar surfaces, too, are more than ordinarily developed. Here follows the technical description:—

*ACANTHIZA ROBUSTIROSTRIS* (Thick-billed Tit), sp. nov.

Head, nape, and upper mantle clear bluish-grey, the feathers having longitudinal black centres, bold on the forehead and crown, but faint and rare on the upper mantle; some of the feathers on the forehead with hoary-grey sections; the lower mantle not so sombre as parts described, and with a brownish tinge; a conspicuous patch of white silky feathers on the rump and its sides; upper tail coverts of a uniform rust or snuff colour; tail feathers same colour at base, blackish for terminal half, with parti-coloured tips of light brown and white; primaries blackish-brown, with whitish margins; ear coverts and cheeks bluish-grey (lighter than crown), with whitish margins, producing a "rippled" appearance; chin and throat ashy-white, showing indistinct dusky edgings; chest brownish-grey; centre of abdomen silky white; sides of abdomen, flanks, and sides of body brownish-buff; under surface of wing deep ashy with greyish margins; under tail coverts silky white; under surface of tail feathers deep ashy, with lighter ash and faint white tips. Flesh measurements—total length, 3.5; culmen, 0.3; wing, 2.1; tail, 1.6; tarsus, 0.8. Iris pale brown; legs, feet, and bill black.

The sexes are alike in colour except that the upper surface

is not so dark in the female. The buff colouring on portions of the under surface of the latter is, however, richer, and encompasses more of the abdomen, than in the male.

*Locality*.—Day Dawn, Murchison.

Types in Western Australian Museum, Perth.

### From Magazines, &c.

IN *The Wombat* (December, 1902) Mr. F. C. Belcher, of Geelong, contributes numerous chatty field notes on birds observed during a three days' holiday taken at the end of September in the woodlands south of his city. The usual familiar forest birds were met with, but near Jan Juc, close to the edge of the coastal ranges, the Whiteface (*Xerophila leucopsis*), a more inland species, was seen breeding.

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AMONG the interesting additions to the Zoological Gardens (London) were four hybrids between the Rosella and Pale-headed Parrakeets (*Platycercus eximius* and *P. pallidiceps*) and two hybrids between the Golden-shouldered and Many-coloured Parrakeets (*Psephotus chrysopterygius* and *P. multicolor*).—*Avic. Mag.* (February, 1903).

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ORNITHOLOGICAL students will do well to consult *The Avicultural Magazine* for March, 1903. It contains a concisely written article (with plates) by Mr. W. P. Pycraft, M.B.O.U., &c., on "The Topography of a Bird," with an up-to-date glossary. Technical terms to a general reader are foolishness, but in a scientific description of a bird are simply indispensable.

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IN part 3, vol. xxvii., *Proceedings Linnæan Society N.S.W.* (issued 16th December, 1902), Mr. A. J. North has furnished descriptions of the nest and eggs of the scarce Buff-sided Robin (*Pæcilodryas cerviniventris*) from the Northern Territory, from specimens loaned by Mr. Charles French, jun., of Melbourne. Similar specimens from the same locality were described by the hon. sec. of the Aust. O.U. (Mr. D. Le Souëf) in the October (1902) number of the *The Emu*, vol. ii., p. 89.

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IN *The Proceedings of the Linnæan Society of N.S.W.*, vol. xxvii. (issued 17th October, 1902, page 207) Mr. A. J. North, C.M.Z.S., has described the eggs of the Fly-catchers *Sisura nana*\* and *Rhipidura dryas*. He also contributes a note on the Long-tailed Grass-Finch (*Poephila acuticauda*), pointing out that the species from Port Darwin and Wyndham

\* The description of this new egg has been anticipated by a few days only by Mr. D. Le Souëf—*vide* page 89 October part, vol. ii.